

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island



Mrs. Ethel Grimball

THAT IS GREAT PROGRESS

When I walk on Johns Island and I stand in the yard and look at the nursing home, look at the lab, look at the clinic, and look across the street at the housing project, I feel like that is great progress. I'm sure that the low cost housing project added ten to twenty years to the life span of a lot of those people who live there because of the living conditions they had prior to that. They feel comfortable, they feel more secure, and they feel good about themselves. And then if anyone gets sick or doesn't feel well, all they have to do is walk across the street to the clinic. And that is great progress.

There's a fight right now to keep it going, because of political reasons, but it's still great progress. That was one of the things my father spoke about—the health care on these islands. I wish he were here to see it.*

*Mrs. Grimball is the daughter of Esau Jenkins.

Mr. William Saunders

**THE SEA ISLAND HEALTH CARE CORPORATION
WAS A POWER BASE**

178
185
94
734
737
665
I think the housing, the health care facility, you have to look at it as an elevation, an improvement. We had the foresight with the health center to add the nursing home and the home for the elderly, so even when they took our health center grant away from us, we owned the building and we owned the property. The health center is now being run by the City of Charleston. The taking over was really a political party fight. In 1980 the Republican party needed to be able to say that they got something going on in the community, so what they did, they found problems with a lot of stuff that was already there—got rid of the Board, got a new Board, and allowed it to function.

185
94
734
Anytime you're talking about being able to control something, anytime you're talking about power, then you're talking about something real that was done. The Sea Island Health Care Corporation was a power base that we put together that exists. It really exists today. We've got forty acres of very choice land. The city now wants twelve acres of it. That's the kind of thing where Esau and others were thinking ahead and did things in advance, and we planned that one way ahead of everybody. And it's there. We've got control of the nursing home and the housing.

Mr. William Saunders

**THERE'S A LOT OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
HEALTH AND POVERTY**

Our goal for the Comprehensive Health Center was that it would serve everybody on the islands and would be totally independent. The first director, Jim Martin, was a real strategist. He and I used to spend hours dreaming and scheming about what could be, how you could work politically within the system and make things work. Jim was a past master at that.

758
464
Beyond just providing health services, for awhile the Health Care Corporation was the biggest employer on the island. We found that when people were working, they were healthier simply because they were making their own living. There's a lot of relationship between health and poverty.

741
758
943
422
We were looking to be able to sell health care to Kiawah and to Seabrook and to the other big interests on the island, which would have actually made the health center self-sufficient. You would not have needed any governmental money. We were just about there when they took it away from us. We don't have control of the daily operation of the clinic. But the people who are using it have to pay us rent. It's a good bit less service than it used to be. But it could come back. The whole facility is there, so the possibilities are unlimited.

4: Carawan & Carawan B, Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 Johns Island

142
 291
 302



Mrs. Bernice Robinson

EVERYBODY LISTENED WHEN ESAU TALKED

554
 758
 74
 (452)
 (734)
 (737)

Esau did not get the kind of recognition he deserved for the work he did. He spearheaded so many things: the Charleston County Citizens' Committee, the Credit Union (and it was countywide, which is very unusual), the Comprehensive Health Center on Johns Island. He would be really proud if he was alive today to know that they got the nursing home and the senior citizens' home. He fought like anything to get the health clinic on the island so they could have medical care for the people over there.

554

While he was living, he didn't get that much praise. But it didn't daunt his efforts at all. His children suffered a lot for him being so aggressive. They couldn't get jobs in Charleston County. But he still wouldn't let that turn him around. He continued to fight for what he thought was right for his people.

554
 191

Esau didn't finish his high school education until after he'd gotten married. There were a lot of people, professionals or educators, who felt that if he changed the way he talked, it would be so much better. But I used to say, "Everybody listens when Esau talks in his same Gullah language." He was telling it like it is, and they heard what he was saying. You would think that with the exposure he had, and with him going all around the country, some of it would rub off. I don't think he wanted it to rub off. He maintained his speech as it was. So he had criticism from a lot of the educated folk, but he was saying what they needed to be saying. And he got the benefits for them.

554
 871

He would have a whole lot to say about education. He would be very disappointed about how far we still have to go, but he wouldn't be bitter about it. He would be saying that we haven't accomplished yet what we need to accomplish. And he would see in what way he could work to bring it about.

Mrs. Berilce Robinson

**ALL THIS IS AN OUTGROWTH OF PEOPLE
FEELING EMPOWERED**

178
891
185

(1743)
(1730)
(1734)
(262)

(873)

On Johns Island you see the results now really, the aggressiveness of the people and the confidence they had in moving forward, when you look at the sea island clinic, and you look at the senior citizen center and the nursing home and the housing project for senior citizens. All this is an outgrowth of people feeling empowered by being able to read and write and understanding how to go about pressing for things like that. They became very active in the PTA and things that they didn't bother with before because they couldn't read or they couldn't understand what was going down. Before they had a high school on the island, a lot of people who had relatives over here in the city would send the children over here to go to school, to try to get an education. And they had to do that for a long time before they got the high school.

But all these things that finally came about, came about from these same people that learned how to read and write and fight for their kids to get a decent education right in their own home rather than having to cross the bridge to come into town to get an education.

Mrs. Ethel Grimboll

**WE'RE GOING TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATES
WE WANT**

666
665

(162)

People are still voting today. Blacks now rule Wadmalaw Island for the Democratic party. Before this, the white people in the Democratic party brought a slate in and then they immediately passed that slate. My father and others said, "We're not going to go along with a slate that they bring in. We're going to vote for the candidates we want." And that's how we changed that situation on Wadmalaw Island. After the voter registration drives, the people got more interested in the importance of voting. Therefore, we got a lot of people on the books. Eighty-five percent of the population on Wadmalaw is black. Most of the whites left the Democratic party when the blacks got control of it. Before that the whites ruled everything on Wadmalaw Island. It was the tradition.

5: Nichols

L-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

Georgetown

26

873 For three generations a few young women on the island have attended college. At the time of the field work for the present study, at least four young women were attending colleges within and outside of the state. No young men were orientated toward college, although one had attended technical school. Reasons for this sex difference will be discussed in the final chapter on social factors related to linguistic change.

512
505 The rhythm of daily life on the island centers around the morning and evening boat trips to and from it. Before seven in the morning the noisy school boat has taken the first load of youngsters to meet the school bus at the mainland landing. Numerous small boats take workers to their cars at the landing or to meet rides on the highway some four miles further. During the day, the only men usually on the island are two who are blind and one or two who may be temporarily sick. Several older women remain, some of whom care for very young children entrusted to their care. Occasionally a younger woman with several pre-school children remains daily to care for them, but most women have mainland jobs. By four o'clock the last boatload of children has returned from mainland schools, and older boys prepare to meet returning parents in the family boats. By dark, most of the people have returned to their island homes and will spend the remainder of the evening on the island, except for special occasions. Occasionally trips will be made to visit a sick

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

94

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE SEA ISLANDS

567
758 offered his services to another planter in that vicinity at \$1.25 a head.⁵¹ On St. Helena Island at least four of the planters were doctors.

567
164 Negroes seem to have been especially susceptible to cholera, "peripneumonia," and dysentery, or bloody flux, as it was most commonly called. When once cholera appeared among the Negroes, it usually could not be controlled until several had died. In 1852 and again in

(165) 1854 cholera swept off many of the best slaves on Louis Manigault's plantation on Argyle Island, Georgia. After these losses, Manigault bought 771 acres of "high land" (1734) on the Georgia main which he used partly for cholera camps and for the summer residence of the Negro children.⁵² In 1855 when about fifty cases of cholera appeared among James Hamilton Couper's Hopeton plantation Negroes, he wrote to his son in alarm, "The causes I cannot discover, they [the Negroes] live at various settlements, are employed in every kind of work, and have the same food."⁵³

(165) Couper considered "peripneumonia" almost as alarming as cholera.⁵⁴ "Peripneumonia" was the ante-bellum term for pleuropneumonia, a combination of pleurisy and pneumonia. Although it did not occur in epidemics, it was nearly always fatal to the slaves. Although dysentery did not always appear among the plantation Negroes in a severe form, in 1857 Henry A. Middleton, Jr., lost forty of his people on Wechaw plantation, near Georgetown, from an epidemic of this disease.⁵⁵ After the epidemic,

⁵¹ Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier*, I, 166.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 143.

⁵³ Couper-Wyllie Papers, March 9, 1855.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, April 13, 1857.

⁵⁵ Wechaw Plantation Book.